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26 AUG 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Post Office Experiment in the Use of Telecommunications for Handling Mail

1. This is for your information and, with respect to paragraph 6, possible action.

2. On 21 August (last Friday) you telephoned me regarding your meeting with the Postmaster General and your opportunity to see the experimental work being done in the use of telecommunications to handle mail. You asked me to have a look at it and to get in touch with Mr. Summerfield's office for that purpose. I did so that same afternoon and got an appointment for 2:30 Monday afternoon, 24 August.

3. Mr. Summerfield gave me some background on the project and then took me to the experimental set-up they are working with. I found that they are using conventional facsimile equipment over a telephone circuit to the Post Office in Los Angeles. There is nothing new here technically but the concept of the use of facsimile for handling not only correspondence of Government agencies and business but mail for the public is new so far as I know.

4. At present there is no security or even privacy in this method of handling mail. Of course, security for Government use could be provided by encryption of the material transmitted just as we do now to the Contacts Offices of the Office of Operations. It was explained to me that there is under development a method of providing privacy for the users of such a system. The method appears to be practicable, at least it offers more privacy than telegrams or the "V-Mail" that was used in World War II.

5. Mr. Summerfield told me that he intends to present to The

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President in the near future this proposed use of telecommunications for handling mail. He asked if you would send him a memorandum supporting the concept. I explained that this Agency has a very low volume of domestic correspondence and accordingly the proposed system would not be of great value to us. However, I said I would tell you of his request.

6. I think that the system Mr. Summerfield has in mind would be of great benefit to many Government agencies and the public at large, particularly if some "privacy" in handling the mail can be provided. I do not know your views in this matter but, in the event you wish to express to the Postmaster General some degree of support for his program, I have attached a draft of a suggested memorandum for your consideration.

[redacted]
Director of Communications

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